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Dr. Meigs read the following extract of a letter from Dr. E. A. Abaddie, U. S. N., accompanying the donation of skulls presented by him.

Nos. 1 and 2 are crania taken from the ruins of Gran Quivira; they were brought in by an expedition under the command of Major Carleton, who explored the ruins thoroughly, and presented me No. 1 skull.

No. 3. Was disinterred by myself, and found in the centre of the ruins of the church at Guarra, N. M.

No. 4. Is the skull of Jose Largo, a Mescalero chief, who was killed in a foray near Bosque Redondo, near the Pecos River, N. Mexico.

No. 5. Is the head of a Pueblo Indian, taken from the churchyard of their village Laguna.

No. 6. This skull was found with many other human remains, in a very bad state of preservation, in making excavations in an old field, in Santa Fé, N. Mexico. This head, and the remains found, evidently belonged to the same race of Indians which formed the numerous population of the large towns long since in ruins, and of which so little is known; as Gran Quivira, Abo, Guarra Pecos, old Church, &c.

September 29*th*, 1857.

Vice-President Bridges in the Chair.

The Committee to whom the following papers were referred reported in favor of publication in the Proceedings, viz:

Observations on the Wild Turkey, by John LeConte.

Descriptions of some new Reptiles, collected by the U. S. Exploring Expedition under the command of Capt. Chas. Wilkes, U. S. N., by Charles Girard.

Observations on the Wild Turkey, or GALLOPAVO SYLVESTRIS, of Ray.

BY JOHN LECONTE.

Whoever has compared the Wild Turkey of the United States with the domestic animal of the same genus, must have observed that there existed very striking differences between them. These differences do not consist of slight and unimportant particularities, but in radical disagreements, which ought to remain unchangeable under all circumstances, and which form good specific characteristics.

In the tame bird, the colors vary infinitely, and in the wild one, very considerably. The great mark of distinction is in the enormous palear or dewlap of the former, which extends from the base of the lower mandible to the large caruncles on the lower part of the neck. Whatever alterations may have been produced by long domestication, this palear could not have been formed by an enlargement of the rather loose skin of the neck. It is a specific character, which as in our own bird is not found in the Meleagris ocellata of Honduras. It has been observed by my son in a former number of our Proceedings, that all derivative variations are monstrosities, and take place chiefly in those parts, which in a normal state of existence, are impossible in the genus, as we observe in hornless beeves and tailless cats, in feather-crested fowls and solid-footed swine.

The conviction that these two birds were really distinct species has long existed in my mind: more than fifty years ago, when I first saw a Wild Turkey, I was led to conclude that one never could have been produced from the other. I have mentioned this to many ornithologists, but no one would take the trouble to investigate the matter. At length Mr. Gould, one of the best ornithologists of Europe, in the 304th number of the Proceedings of the Zoölogical Society of England, has made the discovery, that there have been two species confounded together under the name of Meleagris gallopavo. He calls his species M. mexicana having received it from Mexico. I cannot determine from his description, whether it is different from ours, or is the original of the domestic bird. Mr. Gould confines himself entirely to a description of its colors, a very imperfect method of discriminating species. He mentions nothing of the existence or non-existence of the palear, nor of the frontal caruncle so long and extensible in the one, so short in the other. I am however inclined to believe, that his species differs in no manner from our native species. He quotes Brisson as describing his bird, (*Brisson*, *Synopsis Methodica Avium*, Vol. 1, p. 158,) and states that Linnæus's description of M. gallopavo is founded on Brisson's *Gallopavo sylvestris* and Ray's New England Wild Turkey (*Synopsis Avium et Piscium,* page 51, No. 3). Brisson describes and figures the domestic animal: to prove this more fully I quote his words. He says "palea longa sub gutture pendula. Une membrane charnue longitudinale pendante sous la gorge."

He mentions afterwards among the Varieties, le Dindon sauvage or Gallopavo sylvestris Novæ Angliæ of Ray. I omit any description of these two birds. Sufficiently detailed accounts of them have already been published, and shall merely observe that the Wild Turkey has been very minutely described by the Prince of Canino in his American Ornithology.

It may not be amiss to add here some observations on the introduction of the Turkey into Europe. It appears that the earliest visitors to the tropical regions of America observed the Turkey both wild and in a state of domestication. The natives therefore had been able to tame them; their transportation to foreign countries was thus rendered easy. In about thirty years after the first landing of Columbus in America they are mentioned as birds newly introduced into Europe. The province of Yucatan is particularly mentioned as the place where they were first observed, but I cannot find them mentioned as being cultivated in Spain previous to the year 1520. This may in some measure be owing to the want of Spanish publications of that early date, or at least of translations into the English language of any that may have appeared. We copy the English in thinking that the Spanish have no literature worth noticing: whereas three centuries ago they were far beyond other European nations in literature as well as in all the arts and sciences which adorn or benefit a state of civilization. If we could obtain all that was written and published in those days relative to this portion of the globe, much of the absurd and false relations of modern historians would be treated with the neglect they well deserve. It is a remarkable circumstance in the history of Europe, that the æra of the introduction of many important articles of domestic use even in more modern times, is entirely unknown. No one has ever thought it worth while to record the date of the introduction of the Turkey, of Tobacco or of the Potato, into the other continent from the foreign countries where they were first found. In the case of the latter vegetable which has done so much good in the world, and has in fact altered the dietetic habits of whole nations, no one has been able to discover whence it came, or by whom it was first introduced to the notice of civilized men. I scarcely notice the story of its having been brought by Sir Walter Raleigh from North Carolina, as it could not grow naturally in that country, and he never sat foot on the soil of North America.

The peculiar habits of an animal which strongly resembles another, are frequently sufficient when joined to even slight corporeal characters to distinguish it from others. I have before observed that the Turkey was found domesticated among the nations of Central America. Now the bird which we have native among us never has been domesticated. All attempts to conquer its peculiar habits have failed, notwithstanding what has been said and written to the contrary. I defy any one to show a Turkey, even of the first generation, produced from a pair hatched from the eggs of a wild hen. We have every year in our markets offered for sale, birds of a very dark color, and in some degree resembling the wild species: but in every instance by the presence of the palear, the imposition can be detected at first sight and the cheat exposed. I have known the eggs found in the woods hatched by a domestic hen, the chickens brought up carefully, and rendered so tame and familiar as to eat out of the hand, and to shew considerable pleasure whenever persons with whom they were acquainted approached them. Yet they never would associate with the domestic turkies, studiously avoiding their company, and in little more than a year running off to the woods, and never again returning to the haunts of their infancy. I know that I shall be contradicted in this statement, and many quotations from authors brought forward against me. I repeat, contrary to the assertions of many others, that no one has ever succeeded in domesticating our Wild Turkey; I speak not only from my own personal observations, but from the undivided testimony of many southern gentlemen. The Turkey of our own poultry yards, which when young is difficult to bring forward, it was thought might be obtained of a hardier race, by a new domestication; but every attempt has failed, nor can I find a single well-authenticated case of a mixed breed being obtained.

Descriptions of some new Reptiles, collected by the U. S. Exploring Expedition, under the command of Capt. Charles Wilkes, U. S. N.

THIRD PART.—*Including the species of Ophidians, exotic to North America.*

BY CHARLES GIRARD, M. D.

In the "Fauna Peruana" we find described, a species of worm-snake, Scolecophides, which, having teeth upon its lower jaw instead of the upper, belongs to the same group with *Catodon* and *Stenostoma*, and since it differs generically from both the genera just mentioned, we propose the new genus

SABRINA,

with the following diagnosis: Head depressed, subovoid. Rostral plate extending under the snout. One nasal and one frontonasal: nostril between them. A preocular or postnasal. A frontal. A postoculo-labial. A parietal and a post-parietal.

SABRINA TESSELLATA.—*Typhlops tessellatum*, TSCH. Faun. Peruan. Herp. 1845–46.

Locality.—Coast of Peru.

To the family of *Calamaridæ* we add the following species thus characterised:

RABDION OCCIPITALE.—Head very much depressed; eye large. Dorsal scales disposed upon fifteen longitudinal series. Ground color yellowish; scales margined with brown; beneath unicolor. Head and neck black with an occipital yellow spot.

Locality.—New Holland.

There is likewise a tree-snake, or Dendrophid, which is believed to be undescribed, and which we record under the name of

DENDROPHIS PRASINUS.—Its dorsal scales are very much emarginated posteriorly, and disposed upon thirteen longitudinal series. The preanal scutella is divided. Color uniformly green with a whitish line along the abdominal ridge.

Locality.—New Holland.

Amongst the true Colubrinæ we met with a new generic type somewhat related to *Rhinechis* and *Pituophis*, being characterised as follows:

CALLIRHINUS.

Head and body colubriform. Snout subconical, protruding beyond the lower jaws. Vertex plate elongated. Rostral convex. Two nasal plates with nostril between them. Two loral plates. One anteorbital and two postorbitals. Third and fourth upper labials entering into the orbit. Scales moderate, smooth. Preanal scutella divided. Subcaudal scutellæ disposed upon a double series.

Callirhinus patagoniensis,—is the only species that has, so far, come to our knowledge. The scales are disposed upon nineteen longitudinal series. The ground color is olivaceous, maculated with black.

Locality.—Coast of Patagonia.

Another genus of non-venomous serpents,

CANTORIA,

is framed upon the following characters: Body subcylindrical, deeper than broad, and very much elongated. Tail moderate, thick upon its base and conical posteriorly. Head depressed, continuous with the body. Mouth moderate. Eye very small. An odd, narrow, prefrontal plate. Nasal plate unique (one right and one left), situated upon the upper surface of the head. One loral. Orbital plates constituting a complete circle around the eye. Scales moderate, smooth, shining, disposed upon nineteen longitudinal series. Preanal scutella divided. Subcaudal scutellæ disposed upon a double series.

The typical species of this genus is *Coronella violacea*, Cantor, Journ. Asiat. Soc. xvii. 1847, provided our determination be correct.

Locality.—A specimen of the above species was procured at Singapore.

Next in order is a species closely allied to its congeners, and which we propose thus to characterise:

Xenodon ancorus.—Two anteorbital and two postorbital plates. Dorsal scales smooth, disposed upon seventeen longitudinal series. Brownish red above, with transverse blotches along the back and an anchor-shaped spot upon the head. Beneath unicolor.

Finally, we institute amongst venomous serpents, the genus

DOLIOPHIS,

which may be recognised by a sub-cylindrical and very much elongated body; the tail being moderate. The head depressed, though continuous with the body. Mouth moderate, provided anteriorly with two fangs on either side. Cephalic plates normal. Two nasals, with nostrils between them. No loral plate. One anteorbital. Third and fourth labials entering into the orbit. Two postorbitals. Scales smooth, shining, disposed upon thirteen longitudinal series. Preanal scutella entire. Subcaudal scutellæ disposed upon a double series.

Doliophis flaviceps.—*Elaps flaviceps*, Cantor. Journ. Asiat. Soc. xvii. 1847, is the only species so far known to us as belonging to this genus.

Locality.—Singapore.